

I want YOU for this survey!

Social identity and descriptive norm interventions in email reminders

About us

The SOM Institute - national annual surveys in Sweden since 1986

The Swedish Citizen panel (SCP)

- Non-commercial online panel at the University of Gothenburg with over 70,000 active respondents
- Both probability and non-probability recruits in the panel



**The Swedish
Citizen Panel**

Introduction

Problem

- Declining participation rates in web panels worldwide
- Focus on hard-to-reach groups

Solution

- Varying content of reminders as a tool to increase participation rates
- Applying psychological mechanism to increase motivation to respond
- A cost-free intervention

Psychological mechanism(s)

Social identity theory

We create our social identity through the groups we are a part of (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

- Possibility to trigger a positive social identity which the respondents belong to
- May increase motivation to participate by being “seen/feeling important”

Descriptive norm theory

We will act accordingly to what is most commonly done by others (Cialdini et al., 1990; Cialdini et al., 1991)

- Possibility to elicit a sense that the majority of the respondents have partaken in the study
- May increase motivation to participate by feeling it is the “common/right thing” to do

Previous research

Social identity and behavior

- Increased voter turnout when primed as voters instead of voting (Bryan et al., 2011)
- Increased response rates in surveys when focusing on specific group quality – we need people like you (Dolinski et al., 2024)

Descriptive norm and behavior

- “The majority of the hotels guests’ reuse their towels” – increasing a behavior (Goldstein et al., 2008)
- Norm-based persuasive message for completing a survey increased response rates (Misra & Marino, 2012)

Experimental design

2 (social identity) x 2 (descriptive norm) factorial design

Control

Social identity

Descriptive norm

Combo social identity + descriptive norm

Sample and procedure

Experiment in 3 different surveys

Survey 1. 4,200 non-probability recruited respondents (stratified age/gender/education)

Survey 2. 1,183 probability recruited respondents

Survey 3. 4,500 non-probability recruited respondents

All 3 studies were conducted in December 2024 until January 2025

Reminder 1 – after one week

Reminder 2 – after two weeks

Study 1 & 2 field period - 33 days, study 3 field period - 27 days

Control group

Hello!

A while ago you received an invitation to the next stage of the Swedish Citizen Panel. You still have the opportunity to participate.

You can access the survey via the following link:

[Till Medborgarpanelen](#)

Social identity

Hello!

A while ago, you received an invitation to the next stage of the Swedish Citizen Panel from the University of Gothenburg. We need more responses from people like you.

You can access the survey via the following link:

[Till Medborgarpanelen](#)

Control

Hello!

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Descriptive norm

Hello!

A while ago, you received an invitation to the next stage of the Swedish Citizen Panel from the University of Gothenburg. Most people have already responded, but we still need your answer.

You can access the survey via the following link:

[Till Medborgarpanelen](#)

Control

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Combo

Hello!

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Control

Hello!

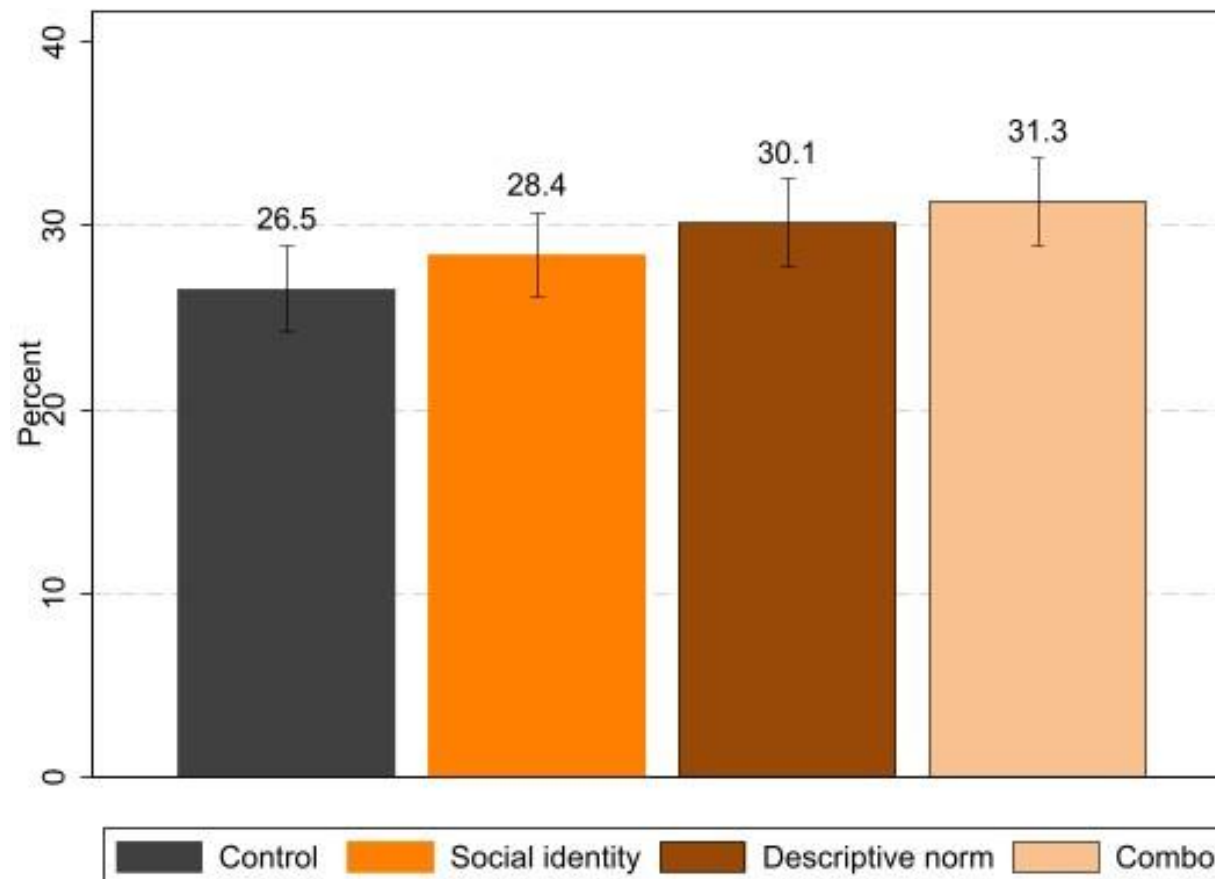
A while ago you received an invitation to the next stage of the Swedish Citizen Panel. You still have the opportunity to participate.

You can access the survey via the following link:

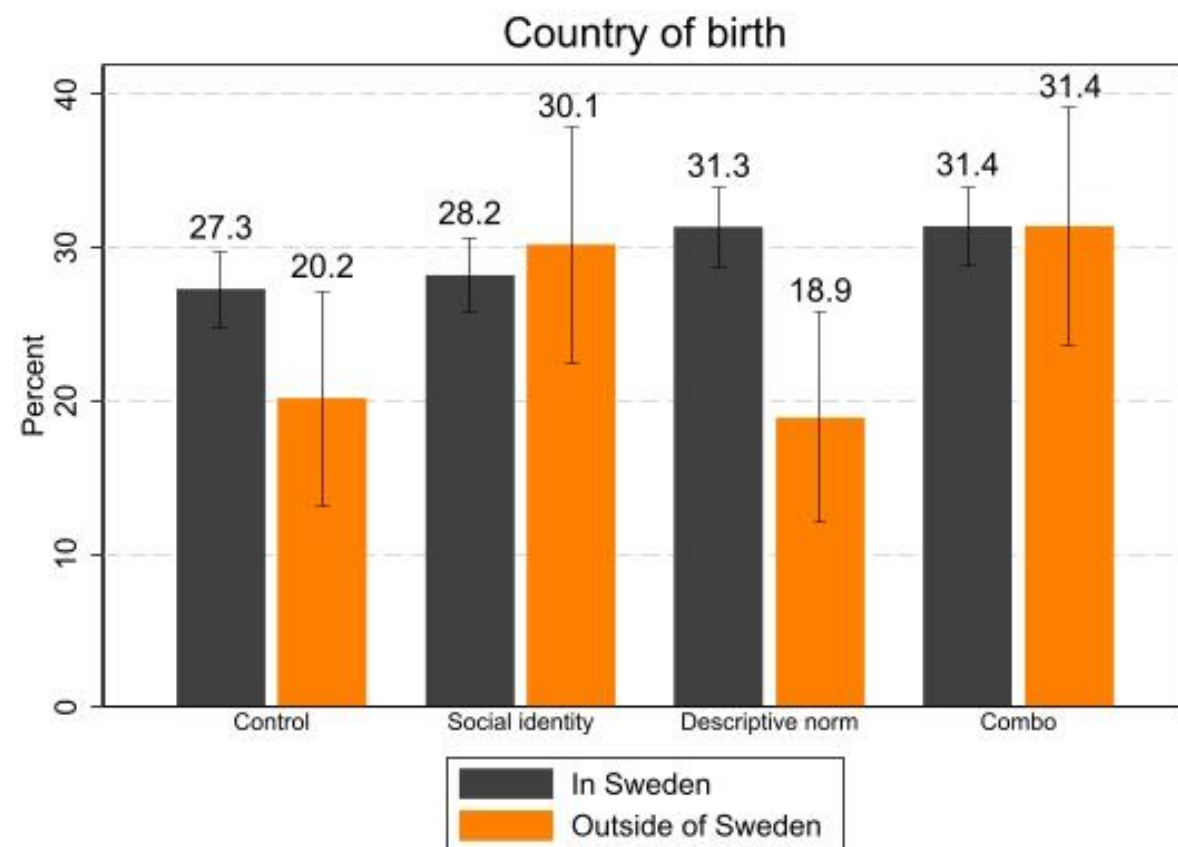
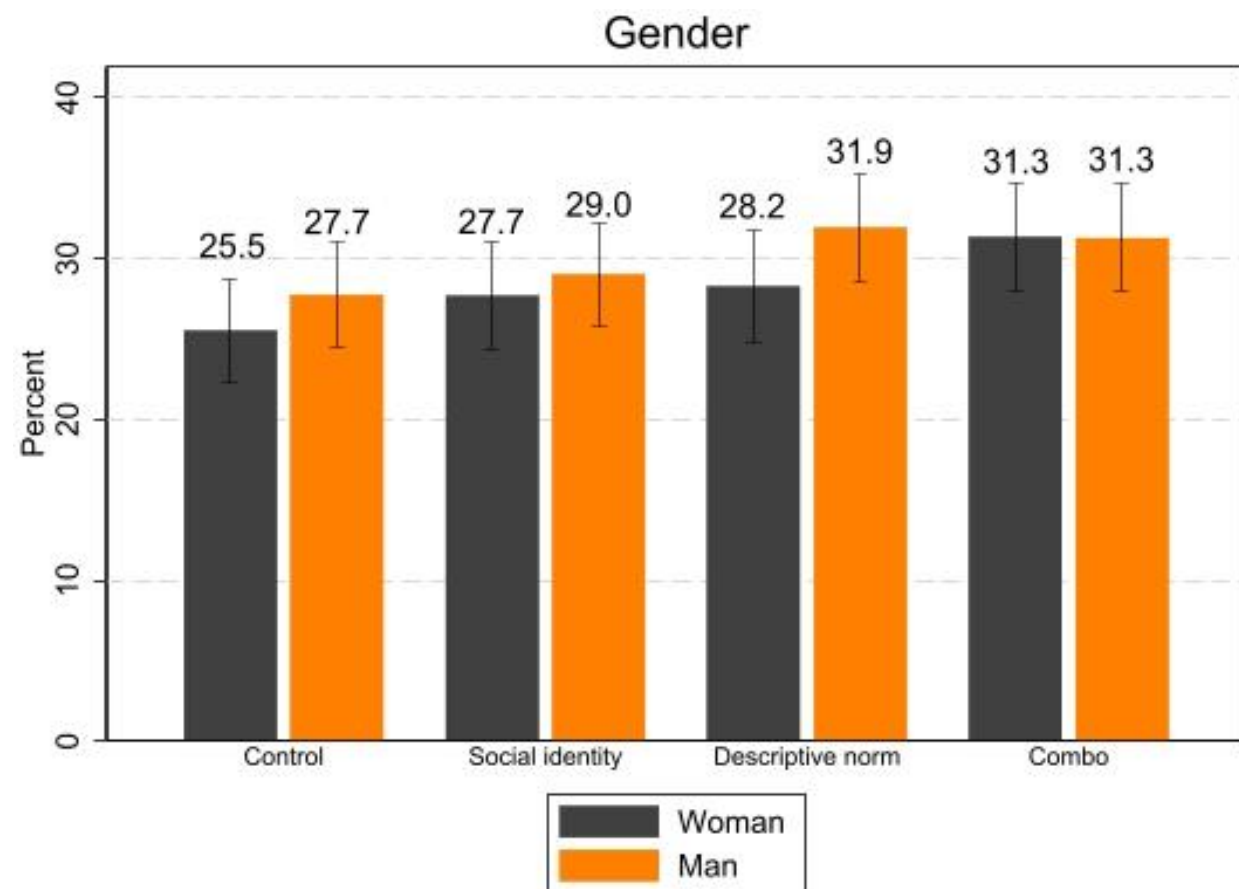
[Till Medborgarpanelen](#)

Results - all three studies combined

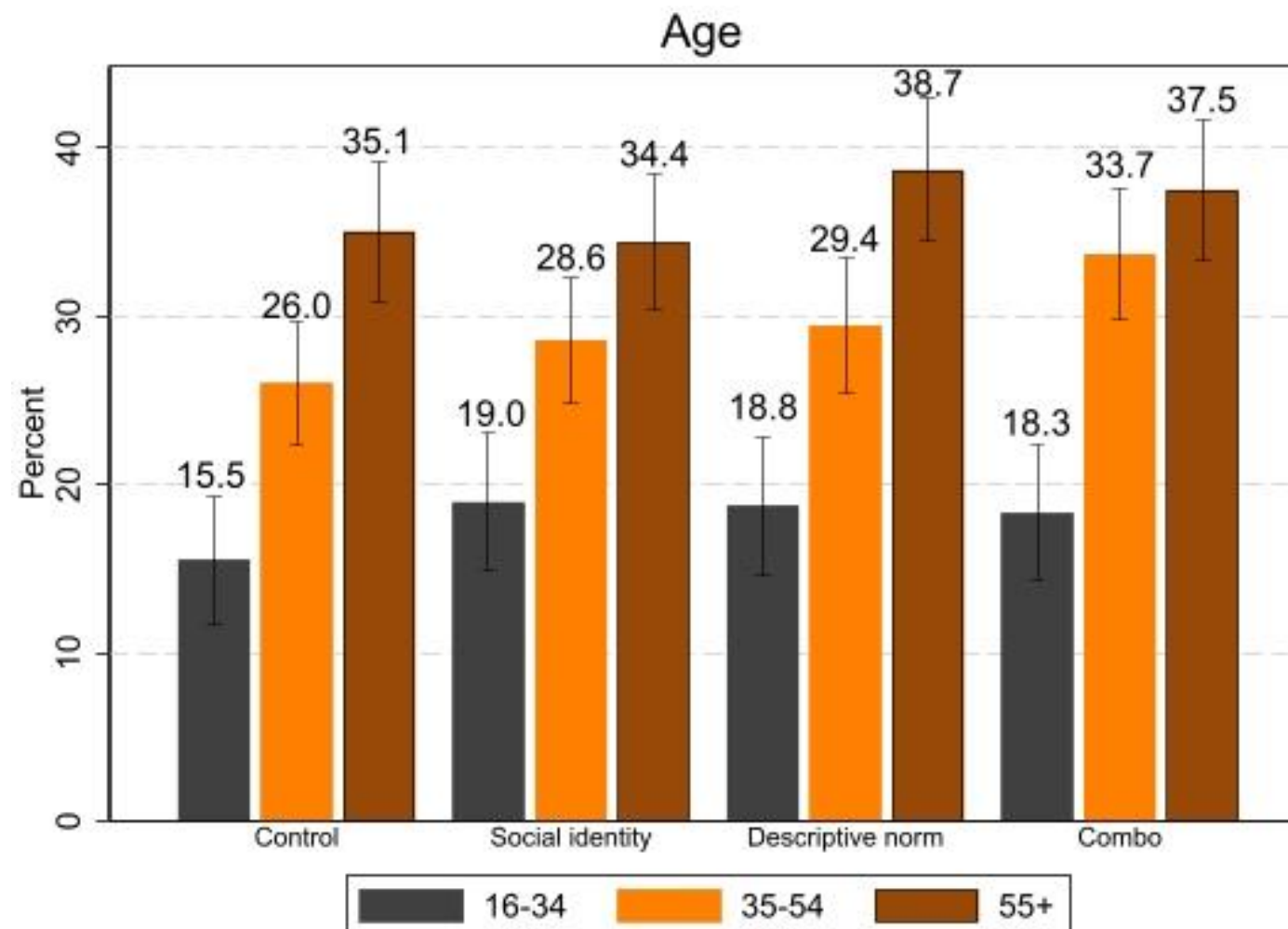
Participation rates among respondents who had not responded before first reminder



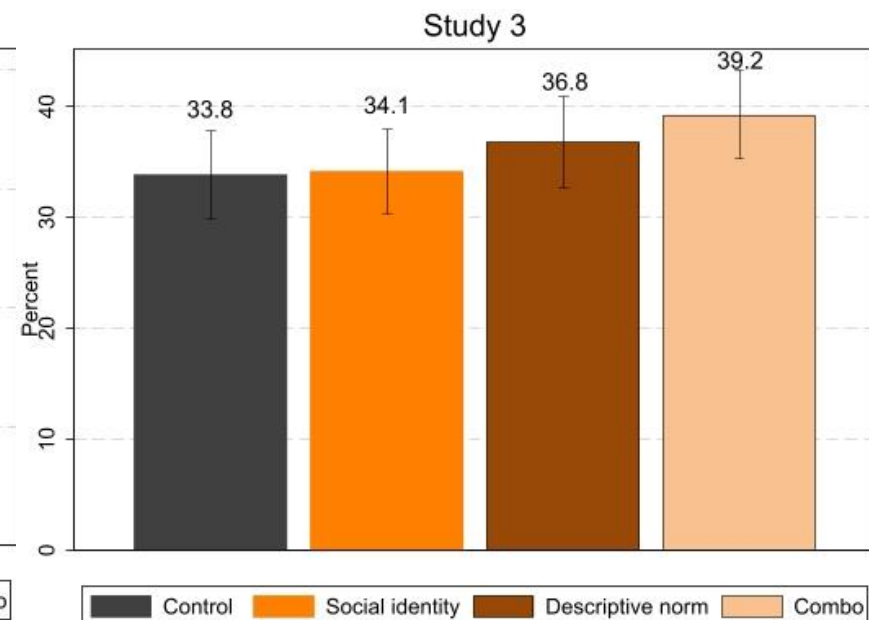
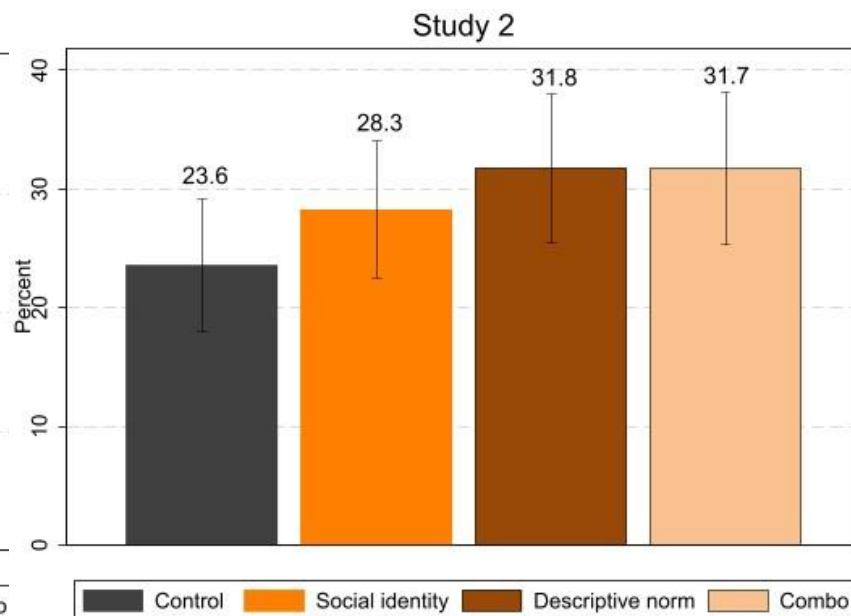
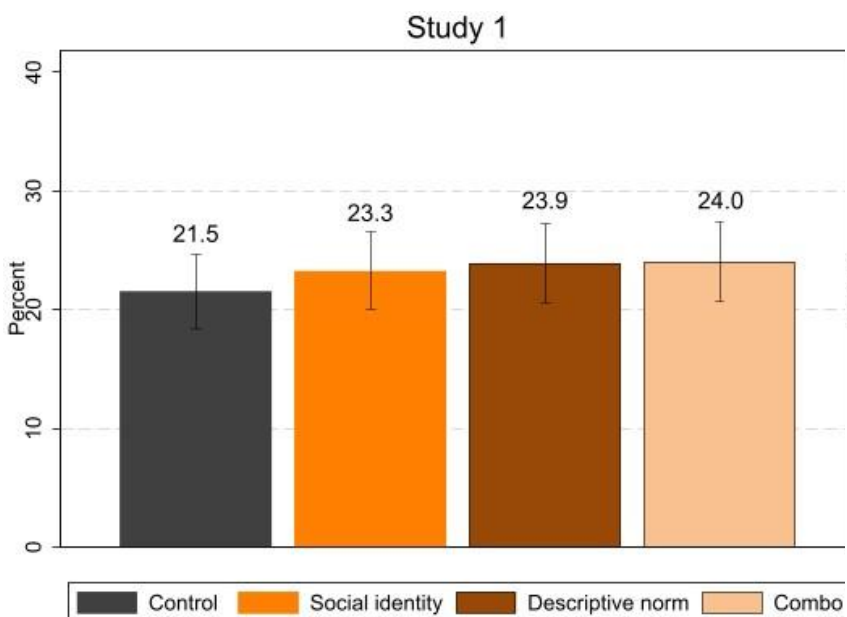
Sub-group analysis



Sub-group analysis



Results – each study individually



Conclusion

A small significant increase (3-4 %) in participation rates for descriptive norm and combo reminders

Certain groups appear to react more to text-intervention (women and those between 35-54)

More tests needed on reminders to participants over several surveys to see if effect increases or decreases with time

Thank you for listening!

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The SOM institute's research on survey methodology

<https://www.gu.se/en/som-institute/publications/research-on-survey-methodology>